

### Shorter Contributions

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THE PHANTOM DARNER, *TRIACANTHAGYNA TRIFIDA*, A DRAGONFLY NEW TO VIRGINIA--Lord Fairfax Community College operates a spring and fall bird banding station at Little Island Park at the south end of Sandbridge, Virginia Beach. The station is located in coastal strand scrub habitat on the eastern shore of Back Bay adjacent to Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge. During our banding operations we may incidentally catch dragonflies. Students are taught the common species and record their identity as they free the dragonflies from the nets. Any unfamiliar species are brought to the banding tables for identification.

On 2 November 2004, Wendy Willis retrieved a dragonfly from a mist net that we identified as a Phantom Darner (*Triacanthagyna trifida*). The range map in Dunkle (2000) indicates the species is found in southeastern United States with the northernmost occurrence in coastal central North Carolina. The North Carolina Natural Heritage Program has assigned the species an S2 status (imperiled in NC because of rarity or some factor(s) making it very vulnerable to extirpation from NC; 6-20 extant populations) (LeGrand et al., 2004). Outside of Florida, there are very few specimen records of *T. trifida* in the United States (five county records for Georgia, one for South Carolina, and four for North Carolina; Donnelly, 2004; Abbott, 2005; Mauffray & Beaton, 2005). The crepuscular habits of this species may be partially responsible for its apparent rarity.

Our specimen (to be deposited in the Virginia Museum of Natural History) was an adult male caught in net KH2. This site has a row of Bayberry (*Myrica* sp.) and Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*) that are up to 20 feet (6 m) tall. The rest of the vegetation is less than 10 feet (3 m) tall. At the base of the net is a mucky freshwater trough where the standing water can be up to one foot (0.6 m) deep. The species was caught at about 1100 h. Presumably, the darner was flushed from a diurnal roost while the students were tending the mist nets.

This area has proven to be a vagrant trap for birds. Two of the birds banded at the station were species previously unrecorded in Virginia (Black-whiskered Vireo, *Vireo altiloquus* and Western Wood-Pewee, *Contopus sordidulus*). The Black-whiskered Vireo has a southeastern U.S. range somewhat similar to the Phantom Darner (Sibley, 2000). It seemed reasonable to think the darner was merely a wind-assisted individual. However, the winds for the previous day

were from the north all morning and east-northeast during the afternoon. There were no previous strong southerly winds which might account for a wind-assisted southern stray.

After returning home, a perusal of our previously unidentified dragonfly photos yielded another *T. trifida* from Little Island. The date on the slide was covered with a label, but because of the film type it had to be taken in 2002 or earlier. This suggests that *T. trifida* may be regular here and possibly a permanent resident. However, the species has not been recorded during Odonata surveys at nearby False Cape State Park (S. M. Roble, pers. comm.). The area at Little Island has been under intense pressure for development. The addition of this species to the already impressive local list of rare flora and fauna will hopefully help to protect this species-rich buffer area for Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge. A special note of thanks goes to Steve Roble and Paul Bedell for their valuable assistance, comments, and verification of *Triacanthagyna trifida*.

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